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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements by individually dividing said semiconductor elements formed on a substrate, said method comprising:

removing semiconductor layers on parting lines so that (i) only an electrode-forming layer on a side near said substrate remains or (ii) no semiconductor layers remains on said parting lines;

forming a protective film so that said semiconductor layers are covered with said protective film and said protective film can be removed by an after-process;

scanning said substrate with a laser beam along said parting lines to form separation grooves in a front surface of said substrate; and

removing said protective film and unnecessary products produced by said laser beam scanning,

wherein said separation grooves formed along said parting lines by said laser beam scanning are used for dividing said substrate into individual semiconductor elements.

2. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 1, wherein the semiconductor layer removal is carried out in an electrode-forming etching process for exposing an electrode-forming portion of an electrode-forming layer on a side near said substrate by etching.

3. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 1, wherein in the semiconductor layer removal, electrode-forming layer side part of said substrate on said parting lines is also removed by dicing.

4. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 1, wherein rear grooves corresponding to said separation grooves are formed in a rear surface of said substrate after the protective film and unnecessary product removal.

5. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 1, wherein a rear surface of said substrate is polished to reduce the thickness of said substrate after the protective film and unnecessary product removal so that said substrate can be divided into individual semiconductor elements by use of only said separation grooves formed in said front surface of said substrate.

6. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 1, wherein a rear surface of said substrate is polished to reduce the thickness of said substrate after the protective film and unnecessary product removal and rear grooves corresponding to said parting lines are then formed in a rear surface of said substrate.

7-11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements by individually dividing said semiconductor elements formed on a substrate, said method comprising:

removing semiconductor layers on parting lines so that (i) only an electrode-forming layer on a side near to said substrate remains on said parting lines or (ii) there is no semiconductor layer on said parting lines; and

scanning said substrate along said parting lines with a laser beam to thereby form broken line-shaped or dot line-shaped separation grooves,

wherein said broken line-shaped or dot line-shaped separation grooves formed by laser beam scanning along the parting lines are used so that said substrate is divided into individual semiconductor elements.

13. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 12, wherein the semiconductor layer removal is carried out by an electrode-forming etching process for exposing an electrode-forming portion of said electrode-forming layer by etching.

14. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 12, wherein in the semiconductor layer removal, a part of the element-forming surface of said substrate on said parting lines is also removed by dicing.

15. (Previously presented) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 12, further comprising:

forming a protective film so that layers formed on a front surface side of said substrate are covered with said protective film before the laser beam scanning and said protective film can be removed by an after-process; and

removing said protective film and unnecessary products produced due to laser beam scanning after the laser beam scanning.

16. (Original) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 12, wherein before said separation grooves are used for dividing said substrate into elements, rear grooves corresponding to said parting lines are formed in a rear surface of said substrate.

17. (Original) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 12, wherein before said separation grooves are used for dividing said substrate into elements, a rear surface of said substrate is polished to reduce a thickness of said substrate so that said substrate can be divided into individual semiconductor elements only by said separation grooves formed in the front surface of said substrate.

18. (Original) A method of producing a plurality of semiconductor elements according to claim 12, wherein before said separation grooves are used for dividing said substrate into elements, a rear surface of said substrate is polished to reduce a thickness of said substrate and then rear grooves corresponding to said parting lines are formed in the rear

surface of said substrate.

19-30. (Canceled)

31. (New) The method of claim 1, as embodied in an electronic chip.

32. (New) An apparatus comprising at least one electronic chip fabricated in accordance with the method of claim 1.

33. (New) The method of claim 12, as embodied in an electronic chip.

34. (New) An apparatus comprising at least one electronic chip fabricated in accordance with the method of claim 12.